

STATE HIGHWAY BRIDGE 20

Spanning Husband Run at Rockland Road (CR 232),

1.1 miles northwest of the intersection of U.S.

202 and Rockland Road

Rockland

New Castle County

Delaware

HAER No. DE-34

HAER
DEL

2-ROCLA

4-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

National Park Service

Northeast Region

U.S. Custom House

200 Chestnut Street

Philadelphia, PA 19106

HAER
DEL
2-ROCLA,
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HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

STATE HIGHWAY BRIDGE 20

HAER No. DE- 34

Location: Spanning Husband Run on Rockland Road (CR 232), 1.1 miles northwest of the intersection of U.S. 202 and Rockland Road, Rockland, New Castle County, Delaware.

USGA Quad: Wilmington North, DEL.-PA.
UTM 18.451080.4404000

Date of
Construction: 1932

Present Owner: Delaware Department of Transportation

Present Use: Riverine crossing for vehicles and pedestrians

Significance: State Highway Bridge 20 is an exceptional example of a single span concrete encased girder bridge. The combination of masonry substructure and "skyscraper style" embellishment links two concurrent trends in Delaware bridge design of the 1930s.

Project
Information: This document was undertaken in July 1992 in accordance with the Memorandum of Agreement by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers as a mitigative measure prior to rehabilitation of the bridge.

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State Highway Bridge 20 is a 20'-0" concrete encased steel girder span, carrying two lanes of traffic on a 25'-0" wide deck. The bridge rests on random rubble stone abutments, with U-shaped wing walls of the same masonry. The wing walls rise to form stone end blocks, framing a concrete parapet featuring battered "skyscraper style" end posts spanned by a balustrade with triangular-headed openings. The fascia is treated as a segmental arch, with voussoirs scored on the surface. Nine concrete encased steel girders, measuring 10" by 10" and spaced at 2'-8" intervals, support the deck.

Delaware Department of Transportation records state that Bridge 20 was built in 1932 and repaired in 1963; alterations most likely consisted of parging portions of the stone wall. Original drawings and contract information are no longer available. State Bridge No. 20 is an exceptional example of a concrete encased girder bridge. The concrete encased girder bridge type commonly was constructed both by county road departments and by the State Highway Department during the period 1925-1935. Most bridges of this type were simple utilitarian structures with minimal embellishment; Bridge 20 is distinguished by its unusual combination of materials and exceptional concrete decoration, contributing to the picturesque character of its setting. Other bridges featuring similar treatment are State Bridge Numbers 2 and 3, both constructed in the early 1930s by authority of the New Castle County Levy Court. Although construction records for Bridge 20 do not survive, its construction date and similarity to these other structures suggests that it may be related to them. Both of these similar bridges were constructed to replace earlier timber covered bridges, as part of a campaign undertaken by the county to upgrade its infrastructure to meet the increasing demands of modern automobile traffic. The masonry elements incorporated in Bridge 20 may survive from a previous structure.

Bridge 20 is an exceptional example of a single span concrete encased girder bridge. The combination of masonry substructure and "skyscraper style" embellishment links two concurrent decorative trends in Delaware bridge design of the 1930s. On the one hand, several small concrete slab and steel girder spans in upper New Castle County are faced with rubble masonry, in an apparent effort to relate to their rustic surroundings as well as to reflect the area's historic association with early turnpike construction; those small stone-faced bridges present an appearance similar to that of nineteenth century turnpike structures. Several similarly embellished bridges were built by the Levy Court of New Castle County in the early 1930's; upon taking over responsibility for all road and bridge construction throughout the state in 1935, the State Highway Department continued the practice. Survey results indicate that this masonry articulation of the girder bridge type was built only in New Castle County. In contrast to these structures which deliberately evoked associations with the rustic

past, other bridges of the period were built with conscious attention to a vision of the future: these structures commonly featured smooth surfaces and stepped forms associated with the design motifs of the "machine age." Bridge 20 is notable for its combination of features from both aesthetics, with a rubble masonry substructure and Art Moderne embellishment to the concrete superstructure.

State Highway Bridge 20 is located in north central New Castle County, the scenic Brandywine Valley area. Husband's Run is a small drainage tributary of the Brandywine River. The general area surrounding the bridge and stream has been incorporated into the DuPont Country Club Golf Course.

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